

Measures of Australia's Progress

Is life in Australia getting better? This is one of the more complex questions that the ABS tries to answer. Doing so is very challenging because each of us has a different understanding about what's important to both individual and national life.

In this edition of ABS Presents we look at two of the criterion or aspects of life that we include in considering our national progress.

According to the latest results of measures of Australia's progress it appears that some aspects of our society and our economy are getting better, but that our environment is not.

Which uni are you thinking of?

UWS because it's got a campus for social work in Bankstown.

Social work or social welfare?

My Mum came here because her parents were very poor, so she was sent here for a better life. They both worked in factories, started everything from scratch. Both my brother and I went to uni. It was one of Mum and Dad's wishes.

Yeah, but don't forget you'll get exemptions for your TAFE course.

Yvonne made it into TAFE and hopefully she'll move onto university after that.

I'm using it as a way to get into uni. It's basically an 18 month diploma and that will get me a guaranteed job afterwards, and then I'll be able to go into uni and study it part time and get a Bachelor of Social Work. I really want to become a social worker. I'm really, really passionate about it, especially working with children and youth. Having a higher degree, I guess it makes me feel better knowing that I have that extra qualification.

Education and training is very important in helping people to develop knowledge and skills that may be used to enhance their own living standards as well as those of the broader community.

Between 1999 and 2009 the proportion of people with a professional or vocational qualification increased from 49 per cent to 62 per cent.

Water is fundamental to our physical survival. Our economy, particularly agriculture, also relies on water. We've experienced prolonged periods of

drought and there has been a decline in our waterways, with one quarter deemed to be overused. However, with water restrictions in place and an effort by Australians, the latest information from the ABS shows that water consumption has declined over a five year period from 312 kilolitres to 268 kilolitres per household.

I'm Marion and this is Dave. We're expecting our first child in about a month and we've bought our first house recently too.

So in our main bathroom the toilet had an old fashioned single flush system. So we put in a water efficient dual-flush.

We're already recycling water from the shower in a bucket. We put water efficient showerheads into the showers, and we needed to replace the dishwasher as soon as we moved in so we made it a priority to find a really water efficient dishwasher.

Australia is such a dry continent and water usage and availability is such a huge issue so we want to do our part.

It just seems so silly that we use beautiful fresh drinking water to flush our toilets and water our gardens when with a bit of thought you can use a grey water system and save so much fresh drinking water.

1,000 litres would fit perfectly in that space.

Ah okay, so it doesn't all have to be in the one place. We can ...

No. We can just keep adding onto it as we ...

Connect them as we need ...

When you're renting it's just so much harder to put in the things you want to do. Now we can put in water tanks and grey water systems and all the things that will actually make a difference.

These are just two of the areas of life that we include but there are many more, including health, crime, biodiversity and wealth. But what do you think? Is life in Australia getting better? Visit our web site and draw your own conclusions.

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